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2  
TWO

# SERMONS:

THE ONE ON

JOHN. i. 46.

*And Nathanael said unto him, Can there  
any good thing come out of Nazareth?  
Philip saith unto him, Come and see.*

THE OTHER ON

1 COR. iii. 11.

*For other foundation can no man lay, than  
that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

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By JAMES PEIRCE.

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I COR. III. 14.

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BY JAMES FLETCHER.

LONDON.

Printed by John Sturges, at the  
Sign of the Anchor, in St. Dunstons Church-yard,  
near the North Gate.





# THE PREFACE.

**T**HESE two sermons were preach'd in my own place, in January last, without any design of publishing them. But in a late journey to London I took them with me, and preached them there; upon which several of my friends earnestly press'd me to print them. The first of them they thought might have some good effect upon mens tempers, to cool them: and I was the more willing to yield to them, because I apprehended any thing of such a tendency must be peculiarly seasonable at this time, when some men are so warm in censuring and condemning their neighbours. As to this sermon, I must request the reader to peruse it as a sermon preach'd to my own people; since he will meet with several things in it, as 'tis now printed,

which I did not think proper to deliver in any other audience; and therefore, when I preach'd it in London, either alter'd them, or wholly left them out.

AS to the other sermon, I was much more backward to print it, till I perceived my friends reasons were, that I might do justice to my self. I own I cannot think it deserves, or will well bear a publication, with the few alterations that I could allow my self to make in transcribing it, after it had been so very lately deliver'd from the pulpit. But I am sensible what the design of some men is, namely, to represent me as a Deist, and an enemy to revealed religion; tho I profess most solemnly that I cannot guess the occasion I have given them, except it be that I declare my self an enemy to every thing in religion which I can neither discover by the light of nature, nor can find revealed in my Bible. Whatever help I can get from either of these, I gladly embrace; and I hope I use the best understanding I have, and neglect no proper means in the search. I shall be glad if that hasty, popular composure may be a means to satisfy any unreasonably prejudiced against me, and such as I am, that I am as heartily desirous, as any of my neighbours, to preach Christ as the only Redeemer and Saviour of sinners. But if neither this, nor the innocence of my behaviour, can satisfy some prejudiced persons, I pray God to forgive them, and am resolv'd that by his help I will not suffer them to break in upon the quiet and peace I have in my own mind.

I ASSURE the reader I am little moved with the treatment I shall now take some brief notice of; I mean what Mr. Bradbury has said in the preface to his late sermons. In this, and another late performance of his, he has not only loaded the majority of his brethren in and about London with undeserved reproaches; but has likewise thought fit to treat in the most injurious manner many



ny gentlemen of distinguish'd rank and establish'd reputation among the Dissenters. And in such company I can very easily bear my share of his wild and extravagant resentment. The pretence for his anger against me is, that among many who have born the character of orthodox, I should also cite Dr. Owen as asserting a subordination in the Trinity. I set down eight passages from the Doctor, and upon the two first only he makes his remarks. The first is this: "There is an order, yea a subordination in the persons of the Trinity themselves; whereby the Son, as to his personality, may be said to depend on the Father, being begotten of him." Mr. Bradbury pretends this sentence is delivered by me naked and unguarded, disjointed, mutilated, and torn off. Mark now his wonderful reason. For the Doctor, says he, after those words immediately adds: "But that is not the subordination here aim'd at by Mr. Biddle, but that which he underwent by dispensation, as mediator, or which attends him in respect of his human nature." Mr. Bradbury has my thanks for clearing the matter. I assure him I did not mean that the Doctor was only for such a subordination as Mr. Biddle aim'd at, which would have been nothing to my purpose. The sentence here added the more convincingly proves that the Doctor was for such a subordination as I plead for among the persons themselves, even antecedently to the Son of God's becoming man. Why then should my good friend lose his temper? He adds another passage of the Doctor's at some distance, which I suppose he hoped would so clear his meaning, as to reflect on my sincerity. 'Tis this: — "Our Saviour saith, My Father is greater than I, which he was and is in respect of that work of mediation which he had undertaken; but *Inequalitas* [*inequalitas*] *officii non tollit equalitatem* [*equalitatem*] *natura*. " He

“ He that was less than the Father, as to the  
 “ work of mediation, being the Father’s servant,  
 “ is equal to him as a Son, as God to be blessed  
 “ for ever.” Now it is manifest that I never design’d  
 to represent the Doctor as holding a subordination, and  
 denying an equality. I have expressly provided against  
 this, West. Inquis. p. 138, 139. and charge it upon the  
 gentlemen I quote as an inconsistency, that they hold both  
 a subordination of persons, and equality of nature; which  
 I humbly conceive is a contradiction; and so I leave it  
 with my friend to account for it.

ANOTHER injury, he says, is done to the  
 memory of this great man, by the next quotation.  
 In Mr. Peirce’s book it stands thus: “ ’Tis said that  
 “ God made the world by him, denoting the sub-  
 “ ordination of the Son to the Father.” And if  
 these are the Doctor’s words, where is the injury done to  
 his memory? But hear what he says: But will not any  
 one be amazed to find that the whole passage in the  
 Doctor’s own work is this? “ As ’tis said that  
 “ God made the world by him, denoting the  
 “ subordination of the Son to the Father; so  
 “ also the Word is said to make the world as a  
 “ principal efficient cause.” Is not my quotation ex-  
 act? have I said one word that the Doctor has not said?  
 Who is it does most injury to the Doctor’s memory; I by  
 leaving out that part which manifestly discovers the  
 Doctor’s self-contradiction? or Mr. Bradbury, who will  
 needs be so officious as to add it? If God made the  
 world by his Son, and that denotes a subordination of  
 the Son to the Father, then God is the principal effi-  
 cient cause, and the Son is a subordinate cause; or else  
 I desire to be inform’d how the Father’s making the  
 world by him does denote, according to the Doctor, a  
 sub-



*subordination. And has not this man, think we, now a wonderful cause for his fearful out-cry? But let us hear the rest: These quotations are just as true, as the insinuation that follows them; "These famous men are set up, instead of the scriptures, for the standard of truth and orthodoxy."*

*AND what is there amiss in that insinuation, or rather assertion? Let Mr. Bradbury inform us what is now made the standard of truth and orthodoxy. Certainly the Scriptures are not; for if men keep ever so close to them, they are notwithstanding condemn'd as heretodox. If Mr. Bradbury does not know that an appeal is frequently made to such writers instead of the Scriptures, he ought however to give those leave to speak who know better. I request him when he is at leisure to peruse an instance I gave of this nature, West, Inquis. p. 112. which I should have thought might have been a sufficient apology for my speaking as I did. He closes what he has to say of me with this polite and mannerly passage: To such freedom as this, I can say neither less nor more than what the reader will find, Psal. cxx. 2, 3, 4. I think 'tis pity but that the words of the Psalmist should be set down at length, that the good breeding and excellent temper of the gentleman may be manifest. They are these: Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue. What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue? Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper. I am not conscious of the least design of misrepresenting Dr. Owen, or any man else, or of misapplying any sentence I have cited from them. But had I really been guilty of any thing of that kind, methinks Mr. Bradbury*

bury should have been the last man who should reproach me with it. For 'tis so familiar with him to cite testimonies merely according to sound, rather than sense, and the words of the Holy Ghost are so perpetually abused by him in this manner, that I could not reasonably expect he should first cast a stone at me. But as he throws at random, 'tis no wonder he does no execution. And certainly his invective will by all equal judges be esteem'd neither the more mannerly nor christian, upon the account of his profaneness in clothing it with the words of the Holy Ghost. No doubt Mr. Bradbury is well pleased with the talent he has hitherto discover'd of playing with the words of Scripture; wherein he is certainly admirable beyond all the writers and preachers of the age. He had best therefore keep to that only; for I am mistaken if he will not find himself much out of his way, when he attempts to give the true sense of authors. He has so accusom'd himself to disregard this in the inspired writers, who ought to be treated with the highest veneration, that 'tis not likely he will ever treat any authors whatever in a better manner.

I AM still the less concerned, when I observe that I am thus rudely insulted by one who exposes the religion of the blessed Jesus at the same time. For why should I expect better usage at his hands than what I see my great Master hath met with from him? I question whether Celsus, Porphyry, Julian, or any of the most avow'd enemies of Christianity among Jews or Heathens, ever made more scandalous reflections upon our holy religion, than this gentleman has done in these very sermons. Let any one read what he says, pag. 39, 40. and judge whether he writes not like a person designing to favour the Deists. The doctrines of the Gospel are with him unaccountable; and the words of Scripture which he sets down



down are all absurdities to the reason of man. Nay he says expressly, That it [Christ's Atonement] destroys every natural idea we have of divine justice. Was ever any thing like this heard from one pretending himself a christian, and much more a minister of the gospel? Have not all christian writers, and among the rest Dr. Owen himself, endeavour'd to shew how agreeable the scripture-doctrine is to the notions we have of divine justice? Nay, and does not the Scripture let us know, that God set forth his Son to be a propitiation for our sins, to declare his righteousness [or justice] that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believes in Jesus? How can any man sincerely believe the gospel, who judges thus of the doctrine of it? What a being must Mr. Bradbury represent to himself, when he thinks of one who is destitute of every thing which we include in the idea of justice? And can that revelation be from God which would thus represent him? You may as well suppose that a revelation from God should be design'd to teach us there is no God. I am sorry he goes on in the same strain: "I am of the same opinion with those who deny the satisfaction of Christ, that 'tis an irrational doctrine: I mean, it could never have been found out by any reason that is not divine, and it cannot be received by any reason that is not sanctified. I should no more have believed it than they do, by any thing that I could learn from the spirit of the world; but we have the spirit that is of God, that we may know the things that are freely given us of God. Lay aside the evidence of scripture, in the giving of which holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; and the doctrine is so far from being true, that it is ridiculous." Can any thing be more extravagant and blasphemous than this rant? 'Tis

indeed true, we could never have known the method of salvation declared in the gospel without a revelation; because it wholly depended upon the will and pleasure of God, whether any, or if any, what method should be fixed upon: yet certainly now the method God has taken, is set before us in the gospel, it carries in it no absurdities to the true reason of man; it destroys not so much as any one natural idea we have of divine justice; but is so far from being irrational and ridiculous, that it approves it self intirely to the reason of all who fairly examine and judge of things. And will Mr. Bradbury be hardy enough to assert that every one who receives his notion of satisfaction, has the spirit of God, and has his reason sanctified? Does he think it safe to lay such a stress upon the bare belief of any particular notion in religion whatever it be? But I don't wonder that salvation should be made so easy for men who must be supposed to have quitted every natural idea of divine justice, and to have embraced a ridiculous doctrine, as the ground of their hope of salvation. The Lord pity the souls of men, when they who pretend to be preachers publish such things as these for gospel. Such assertions deliver'd under a pretence of an extraordinary zeal for truth, are most pernicious to mens souls, as they tend to make them easy in a presumption of the goodness of their own state, while they are perhaps too like the God they represent to themselves, without any disposition we include in the natural idea of justice.

I WAS the more willing to take notice of that gentleman's performance, that I might give the reader a caution. Otherwise I had but little occasion to say any thing upon my own account, there being nothing  
mate-



*material, besides rudeness, and his own blunders, in his charge against me. I suppose he has already done his best; and therefore I flatter my self that I shall have no occasion of giving my readers any farther trouble about him, whatever trouble he may think fit to give himself about me.*



manner, before the world, and his own friends, in  
 his charge against me. I hope he has already done  
 his best; and therefore I flatter myself that I shall  
 have no occasion of writing my readers any further  
 words about him, who would trouble me by thinking he is to  
 give himself about me.







A  
**SERMON**  
ON

**JOHN I. 46.**

*And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.*



If you look back to the 43 verse of this Chapter, you there find an account of Christ's calling Philip, one of his Apostles. This Philip findeth Nathanael, as we read, *ver. 45. and saith unto him, We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.* In the words of the text which next follow, we have Nathanael's answer, and Philip's reply: *And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.*

THE words are in themselves pretty plain, and need not that I should spend much time in telling you the meaning of them: whatever is necessary to give light to them will fall in as I go along, in the method I propose; which is only to offer you some useful Observations from them, such as these that follow.

**Obs. I.** THE most innocent persons and things may be invidiously and reproachfully spoken of and treated

ted in the world. 'Tis not possible to allege any instance, which will be a fuller proof of this observation, than the treatment our blessed Saviour, the Son of God, experienc'd while he was here on earth. Perfect innocence and goodness met in him: he *never did any evil, nor was guile found in his mouth*; his whole life was filled up with righteousness; he yielded a constant and perfect obedience to all the commands of God; and his carriage toward men was always not only intirely inoffensive, but most kind, beneficent, and obliging; he *went about doing good* both to the bodies and souls of men; curing men of all manner of diseases and infirmities, and giving them the most wholesome and profitable instructions: and yet he could not escape the censure and obloquy of those among whom he lived. He was *despised and rejected of men*, treated with all imaginable contempt and scorn, and *endured the contradiction of sinners against himself*. Thro the whole course of his ministry was he loaded with reproach; and no sooner did he shew himself to the world, but he encounter'd the malignity and fury of men. We need not go so far as the tragical conclusion of his life, to search for instances of this nature. Then indeed ignominy, reproach, and ill usage came upon him to the utmost degree: but all along, thro the course of his ministry, how was he reviled in the bitterest manner for the most useful works which he perform'd! Thro Beelzebub, say they, *the prince of devils, doth he cast out devils*. So that they represented him as a conjurer, one that acted in compact with the devil, the great enemy of mankind, while he was indefatigable in doing them the best offices. Nay they said of him roundly, that he was a Samaritan, and *had a devil*, John viii. 48. They made every thing to serve for an occasion of reproaching him. His family, his brethren and kindred, the mean occupation of his reputed father, and wherein he himself seems to have been for some time imploy'd, are turn'd against him by way of insult. *Is not this*, say they, *Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?* John vi. 42. And again, *Is not this the carpenter?* Mar. vi. 5. And *is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?* And his sisters,



sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? And they were offended in him, Matth. xiii. 55, 56, 57.

THUS the place of his education and abode is likewise turned against him, as a matter of reproach. The providence of God was singularly concern'd in so ordering matters, as that he should be born in *Bethlehem* in *Judaea*; that the prophecy, which expressly fix'd that place for the birth of the Messiah, might be exactly fulfill'd, *Mic. v. 2*. But as his parents were there only occasionally in order to their being tax'd, by which means the prophecy was accomplish'd, so that was not the place of his ordinary residence where he was brought up under them; for that was *Nazareth* in *Galilee*. And how was he insulted and scorn'd upon this account? Thus when *Nicodemus* ventured to speak in the behalf of Christ, the chief priests and the pharisees reply upon him, as they thought, very smartly, *John vii. 52. Art thou also of Galilee? search and look; for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.* They were mistaken in their account; for *Jonah* was a prophet, and he was of *Gath-hepher*, *2 Kings xiv. 25*, and that was in *Galilee*. Had Jesus indeed been born in *Galilee*, he could not have been the Messiah, because he was to be born in *Bethlehem* in the tribe of *Judah*; but since the prophecy, concerning the place where the Messiah was to be born, was so exactly fulfill'd in him, it ought not to have been any offence to the scribes and pharisees, that he afterward lived much in *Galilee*; for they might have easily observed, that the same was certainly true of at least two of the famous prophets of their nation, *Elijah* and *Elisha*. Nor indeed was it hard for them to discover from the prophet *Isaiah*, that the Messiah, when he came, was to live and preach much in *Galilee*. To which purpose we find the words of *Isaiah*, *Chap. ix. 1, 2*, are applied by the Evangelist, *Matth. iv. 13, 14, 15, 16*. And yet however consonant it was to their own prophecies, his being so much in *Galilee* is made an objection against him; and his enemies thought there was much of satyr and sharpness in that question, *Art thou also of Galilee?* As tho they had said: "Canst thou be so stupid as to imagine, that any one who comes out of *Galilee*, can deserve to be regarded as a prophet? "Canst thou be content to be reckon'd a disciple of one who pretends to be a prophet, tho he arises out of

“Galilee?” By reason of our Saviour’s living and preaching much in *Galilee*, he might without any impropriety be call’d a *Galilean*: but the country passing under a disgraceful character, his enemies gave him, and his followers for his sake, this name in a way of reproach. Thus St. Peter was upbraided with it, *Mar. xiv. 70. Surely thou art one of them; for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto.* And this was the name which the Emperor *Julian*, the apostate, used familiarly to give him, calling him in a way of derision, the *Galilean*: and Christians in like manner he used to scoff at under the title of *Galileans*.

AND as *Galilee* in general was reckon’d a reproach to our Saviour, so was that particular city in it wherein he dwelt, namely *Nazareth*. Jesus of *Nazareth*, however it served to distinguish our Saviour from all other persons, and therefore is a name used by his friends and followers, yet by his enemies was it given him by way of reproach. And to this purpose I think that passage is best expounded, *Matth. ii. 23. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.* If you look into all the prophecies of the old Testament, you will not find in them any such expression as this used concerning the Messiah who was to come. Nor does the Evangelist seem to quote any one particular prophet, or any prophetic expression; but to refer to the general sense of all the prophets, who spake before of the coming of Christ: and accordingly he does not say, *That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the PROPHET*, as ’tis ordinary, when the words of one particular prophet are cited; but, *That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the PROPHETS.* And this I take to be the meaning, That all the prophets had foretold, that the Messiah when he came should be treated with ignominy, reproach, and contempt; and in order to the fulfilment of what they said, God so order’d it in his providence, that Christ should have his ordinary residence at *Nazareth*, a contemptible city in a despised country, in *Galilee*, that he might be contemptuously called a *Nazarene*.

YOU may see by what we have in the text, that the prevailing and common opinion of the place was so mean, that they could not easily be persuaded that any good



good thing 'could come out of it. *Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?* Now nothing was more agreeable than to give a despised and hated name to a despised and hated person; and hence they give him the name of *Jesus of Nazareth*, or *Jesus the Nazarene*; and so his disciples are reproachfully term'd, *The sect of the Nazarenes*, *Act. xxiv. 5.*

IF we calmly and sedately examine the reason of things, the place of any person's abode can't be a just matter of reproach. A good man may live in any air or climate; and a judgment is to be formed of persons by quite different things. 'Tis really an evidence of a mean and low genius, nay I think I may say of a base and sordid spirit, when men will oppose such as they do not like, not by strength of argument, but by reproachful and disgraceful names and titles. Why, I pray, might not an inhabitant of *Nazareth* be as good a man, as an inhabitant of *Jerusalem*? Was all virtue and goodness shut up in *Jerusalem*? and all wickedness excluded from it? Could there be no saints but in one place of the world? and must they all be saints who lived there? Why then should Christ and his disciples be thus reproachfully called *Nazarenes*? Truly the reason seems plainly to have been this, That their enemies wanted somewhat to object, that should be a matter of real disgrace; and therefore they endeavour'd to do that by an odious name, which they were not able to do any other way: for a *Nazarene* was a term of reproach then, just as an *Arian* is now.

THERE is naturally in men a tenderness for self: mens interest, reputation, and particular opinions are very dear to them; and the greater degree of innocence there is in those who happen not to fall in with them in any of these respects, the more are they touch'd to the quick; and therefore when they see a necessity of opposing such one way or another, and find no other way of attacking them, they fall upon them in such a mean and childish manner, rather than none at all.

THERE is a good use may be made of this observation. You, my brethren, are the disciples and followers of the blessed Jesus, who met with this vile treatment while he was here in the world: and can you wonder if you do your selves meet with the like?

Should

Should the disciple be above his master? or the servant above his lord? Is it not enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord? If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more may they call them of his household? Matth. x. 24, 25. If they have done these things in a green tree, what may it be expected they will do in the dry? If his perfect innocence and holiness would not secure him from such reproaches and contradiction of sinners, can you flatter your selves that your very defective sanctification will be sufficient to secure you? No certainly. Consider him therefore who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Heb. xii. 3. 'Tis your honour to be like him; and if you are reproach'd for his sake, happy are you; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you. 1 Pet. iv. 14.

'TIS observable, as I hinted before, that however this name was given Christ by way of reproach, yet his disciples did not scruple to use it themselves, as it served to specify and distinguish the person in whom they placed their hopes; and therefore you see Philip, a friend and disciple of Christ, calls him Jesus of Nazareth, ver. 45, and the like is to be met with in other places. Let men give us what name they please, and reckon us of what sect they will, so long as that is all the opposition that is made against us, and we can truly say our doctrine and worship is witnessed to by the apostles and prophets, let us glory in it, that after that way which they call a heresy [or a sect] so we worship our God.

Obs. II. A TRULY honest and good man may be involved in a common prejudice and mistake. Nathanael was certainly such an one; you have our Saviour's own testimony for it, in the next verse to the text: for when he saw him coming to him, he said of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile. And yet 'tis evident he was led away with the common opinion at that time, and that opinion I may well say was a very great and dangerous mistake.

CERTAINLY no mistake can be more dangerous, than for persons not to believe that Jesus is the Christ: and yet as this truth was but then beginning to be made manifest, we have here a good man who had not had



an opportunity to see the evidence of it, and not only did not believe it, but seem'd to be entangled with the common prejudice, that it could not be true.

TWAS the common opinion that nothing good could be expected to come out of *Galilee*, nor consequently out of *Nazareth*, a contemptible place in that country. This opinion, which prevailed among the vulgar, took its rise from the scribes and pharisees, the rulers and doctors of the church in that day. They who were to instruct and teach the people, and who might therefore be presumed to be intrusted with the keeping of divine truth, if any men at all were intrusted with it; they who thought themselves most secure of being always in the right, and counted it a high affront for any one to suppose the common people could be in the right and they in the wrong, and therefore spoke with much disdain of such an insinuation, *John vii. 47, 48, 49. Are ye also deceived? have any of the rulers or the pharisees believed on him? but this people who knoweth not the law are cursed: I say, even these rulers of the people, famous for their skill and wisdom in divine matters, had embraced the notion, and diligently encouraged it, that whenever the Messiah came, he was to appear with great outward pomp and splendour, with the magnificence and grandeur of a mighty temporal prince, and was to subdue all the enemies of the Jews, and break all the earthly powers that hinder'd the gathering of Israel, and establishing them all in their own land, in a state of great power and glory. This notion then prevail'd among the Jews, and our Lord's own disciples labour'd under much of the same prejudice. This occasion'd the two sons of Zebedee to come to him with that petition, Mar. x. 37. Grant unto us, that we may sit one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. This prejudice made his death prove so shocking to his followers, that they were ready to conclude they had been mistaken in taking him for the Christ. We trusted, say two of them, that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel, Luk. xxiv. 31. Nay when his apostles, the prime ministers in his kingdom, were gather'd together to him after his resurrection, they could not divert their minds from the expectation of such a temporal glorious kingdom, speedily to be erected by him; and therefore they ask him*

him that question, *Act. i. 6. Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?*

It can therefore be no wonder that at this time *Nathanael* should be hamper'd with the same prejudice, tho he was an *Israelite indeed, in whom was no guile.* He had not had the means whereby he might be inform'd: he had never seen, or been with *Jesus*; and the place from whence *Philip* here tells him he came, pass'd under so bad a character, according to the notions which then prevail'd, and he had himself all along imbibed, that we cannot wonder he should be averse to the believing that *Jesus of Nazareth* could be the prophet, *that was spoken of by Moses in the law, and by the prophets.*

Let me make two reflections before I leave this observation.

1. *Christ* expects from men according to what they have, and not according to what they have not. Where men have means every way sufficient for their information, he looks for an answerable improvement: but where they have them not, he makes all due allowances. Our Saviour as well knew what *Nathanael* had said to *Philip* against his being the *Christ*, as he did what he had been doing under the fig-tree: he had as well heard him making a frivolous objection in the one case, as he had seen him acting the part of a sincere *Israelite* in the other: and yet knowing, that he was only mistaken for want of information, he does not condemn him; but declares him *an Israelite indeed, in whom was no guile.*

IT WAS in a very different manner he treated the scribes and pharisees, who had heard his doctrine, and seen his miracles. He knew their prejudices were owing to their obstinate and implacable hatred of him; and therefore he never gives them the least commendation for their sincerity, but charges them home with their hypocrisy; telling them plainly they had not the love of God in them, that they believed not him whom the Father had sent, and that if they believed not that he was the Messiah they should die in their sins, &c.

THIS may be a comfort to sincere and upright souls, who unfeignedly endeavour to know and do the will of God. If they have not really had the advantages which others have enjoy'd; yet if they have been diligent to improve those which have been afforded them,



them, Christ will accept of less from them than from others. The involuntary mistakes which we may have fallen into, while we have sincerely endeavour'd to discover and conform our selves to the divine will, while we have not been wanting in a careful reading of the holy Scriptures, and in fervent prayer to God; I say, such kind of mistakes, even in matters of considerable moment, shall not be imputed to us by a kind and gracious redeemer. And therefore,

2. THIS should teach us not to be hasty in judging others, and censuring them for not seeing the same that we do. There are many things which may dissuade us from this: Christ has most expressly forbidden it; we invade an office that does not belong to us, when we are bold in this matter; we are fallible creatures, and may perhaps be our selves in the wrong in that very doctrine, about which we censure our brethren for differing from us. But let it be suppos'd that we, our selves are in the right, and our neighbours in the wrong; yet the judging persons for their mistake is a very nice affair, and requires a skill much beyond ours to meddle with it.

I DESIRE to be understood to speak only of matters of opinion, and not of practice. We may safely say of such as live a notoriously wicked and ungodly life, that they cannot inherit the kingdom of God, without a thro repentance, because the Scripture has expressly asserted the same; but in matters of opinion there are so many allowances to be made, many times for the strength of early prejudices, and the want of advantages for being better inform'd, that 'tis the hardest thing in the world for us to say, upon good grounds, that a person's mistake is inconsistent with the sincerity of his heart.

LET us put the case, that *Philip*, who was convinced, as you see, that Jesus of *Nazareth* was the promised Messiah, that he, I say, had been of the temper which is so common and ordinary in our day; how would he have judg'd *Nathanael* to be a perverse hypocrite, or a forlorn heretic, because he did not believe this great point, which is indeed a fundamental of the Christian religion, and which no man, having the evidence laid before him, can deny without the utmost hazard of his soul? And yet such a judgment would have been very

wrong; for at that very time he was an *Israelite* indeed, in whom was no guile. Thus, my brethren, we may imagine things are very plain to us, and it may be we are right in our judgment, and that is really a truth which we take to be so; yet tho we are bound to embrace the truth as we see evidence of it, we are not bound to judge those who do not see things as we do. They may be *Israelites* indeed, in whom is no guile, and yet for want of some advantages which we have had, and which are perhaps more owing to some special turns of providence, than any prudent consideration of our own, they may not as yet perceive the truth: let us leave it to him who can judge the heart, to determine concerning them, whether they are not as sincere as our selves in seeking and searching after truth.

*Obs. III.* THAT may be a fundamental article of faith to one man, which may not be so to another. This observation, if it appear to be true, will be a farther reason why we should not be hasty in judging one another. 'Tis evident that the believing Jesus of *Nazareth* to be the promised Messiah, is a fundamental article to those who are fully acquainted with the gospel; but yet you see it was not so at this time to *Nathanael*. We can't be saved, unless we believe this; but he, notwithstanding that he believed it not, when *Philip* told him of it, nay tho he objected and cavilled against it, was yet a very good man, and in a state of salvation; for he was an *Israelite* indeed, in whom was no guile, and all such must certainly be in a state of salvation. This soon became a fundamental article with reference to him, even as soon as he had the means of conviction and satisfaction afforded him: and so that which was not a fundamental when *Philip* talk'd with him, presently became so when he was with Christ.

NOTHING can be properly and strictly a fundamental, but what is plainly revealed; and therefore I make no doubt that may be so to one man, that is not so to another; and that may be so at one time to the same man, that was not so a little before, and that too, even supposing the truth has been in general reveal'd or publish'd. Let me instance in a plain fundamental of the christian religion, the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ: mens salvation is now laid upon the belief  
of



of this; but can we say that it always was so, ever since it was first plainly revealed? I think it evident we cannot. Our Saviour had expressly revealed this before his death, and so plainly said that the third day he should rise again from the dead, that his crucifiers were apprehensive of it, and did what they could to prevent it. Here then was a plain revelation, and yet you find the apostles themselves believed it not; nay, when they were afterwards told that it was true in fact, they believed it not, but the report of it *seem'd to them as idle Tales*, Luk. xxiv. 11. But we do not think they were then in a state of damnation upon this account: we allow a vast difference between the revelation that was made by our Saviour in his prediction, and that which was made by the actual accomplishment, when they themselves became eye-witnesses of it.

IN like manner, what may be a fundamental with reference to us Protestants, who by the good providence of God have the free use of our Bibles, for ought I know, might not be so to our ancestors before the Reformation, when the Bible was lock'd up from them, and they had not the advantage of such a free search and inquiry as we have, but were bred up in gross ignorance and thick popish darkness. A man that carefully reads his Bible, would be apt to think that to be as plain a fundamental of the Christian religion, as any other; that as there is but one God, so there is but one mediator between God and man: and yet hard would it be for us who could not be saved, if, having the light we have, we admitted of any other mediator, or endeavour'd to come to God by any other; I say, hard would it be for us positively to assert that this was always so absolutely fundamental, as that none could be saved, who in the times of popish darkness, thro' mistake, join'd other mediators with Christ.

THUS then I think we are to consider and state this matter: Whatever is a fundamental must not only be a truth, and revealed by God; but it must be a truth so far revealed to the person to whom 'tis suppos'd to be a fundamental, as that he is utterly inexcusable, and can't possibly be sincere in his not seeing it. But in this no man should be forward to judge another; the judgment should rather be left to God, and every man's own conscience.

GIVE me leave to say on this occasion, that there are some truths clear and plain enough in the Bible, so that a man who perceives them would think, he that runs may read them; and yet the art and sophistry of men has so darken'd them with strange and unaccountable glosses, that I make no doubt many sincere and upright souls may miss of discerning them; and without question, a good and merciful God will make all due allowances for such a case.

THIS therefore, according to what I urged under the former observation, should be a caution against rash and hasty judging in such cases. And pray, my brethren, take me right: I don't speak this for the direction of others, with reference to you, (I am not now instructing them, as they do not hear me) but I speak it for your direction. If you think you apprehend the truth better than they do, meddle not with their sincerity, judge not them for differing in opinion from you: they may be sincere, tho' they do not perceive the truth, supposing you are not mistaken in your persuasion what is the truth.

*Obs. IV.* GOD will take care to bring sincere *Israelites* out of such their errors and mistakes, as it would be destructive and ruinous to them to continue in. The observation is, I think, fair from the account we here have of *Nathanael*: He did not believe that *Jesus of Nazareth* was the Christ. Such an error as this he could not have continued in without ruin; for unless he believed this, when the thing came to be more notoriously publish'd and confirm'd, he must, with the scribes and pharisees, have died in his sins. But notwithstanding his unbelief in this point upon the testimony of *Philip*, being an *Israelite* indeed, in whom was no guile, our Saviour took a particular care to convince him of his error, which was an error of great importance, and would afterward have been of the greatest possible; he took care to bring him to a belief and acknowledgment of the contrary truth. You may here observe too, how kindly he applies himself to him, in order to his conviction: he does not use severe and rough methods with him; he does not reproach and upbraid him with his not believing a truth of so great importance; but he begins with a commendation of his sincerity, *Behold an Israelite*



Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile. Nathanael was conscious of his own sincerity, and therefore could not but wonder that Jesus should have such a knowledge of him, who had never seen him before. He did not believe that he was the true Messiah, and was not apprehensive that he was able to see into his heart, and to know the disposition thereof; and therefore he says to him, *Whence knowest thou me?* Our Saviour, no doubt, spake as he did to Nathanael with a design to draw this question from him, that so he might satisfy him by his answer, that he was indeed that prophet. And by his answer he lets him know, that he was well acquainted with a secret transaction, which Nathanael could not but well remember, wherein he had been acting the part of an Israelite indeed: *Jesus answer'd, and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee.* And by this means a conviction was effectually wrought, ver. 49. Nathanael answered, and saith unto him, *Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel.*

WE need not wonder, that men who are truly sincere should be thus safe and secure, with reference to all really destructive and damning errors and mistakes. Their own happy disposition lays them open to conviction, and facilitates the entrance of truth into their minds. Sincerity bespeaks the mind to be free from such mean desires, base interests and designs, as do corrupt, and, I may say, bribe as it were the will, and make a person unwilling to perceive things any other-wise than as he would have them be. But where a person is sincere, he has no other interest, at heart, but to discover the truth; and he who is so impartial, is most likely to give it a ready reception, and to recover himself out of any considerable mistakes he may have fallen into, whenever proper evidence is laid before him. And beside that, great is the regard which we are assured God bears to such, and the concern he has for them, and a security they have by his promises, whereby he has engaged himself to lead and guide them. Our Saviour speaks of this as the best way to be secure of the divine conduct, *John vii. 17. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of my self.* Many assurances we have in the

the Scripture of such persons being under a special blessing and direction from God. *The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way. All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, unto such as keep his covenant, and his testimonies. What man is he that feareth the Lord? him shall he teach in the way that he shall chuse. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant.* Pl. xxv. 9, 10, 12, 14. And since upright and sincere men are assured of an happy end, it must be supposed that they are assured of such a guidance as is necessary in order to the attaining it; and consequently they must be secure, that a good and faithful God will not leave them in destructive and damning mistakes. *Psal. xxxvii. 37. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.* But this can't be true, but the end of such may be misery and woe to the utmost degree, if they can't depend upon God, that he will assist them in their sincere endeavours, lead them into all necessary truth, and preserve them from all destructive mistakes.

THIS observation may, I think, very well serve,  
 1. TO recommend sincerity, as most worthy to be pursued by all. If we are, like *Nathanael, Israelites* indeed, in whom is no guile, we are then secure of the divine conduct. And can any thing be more advantageous to us? How liable are such weak and short-sighted creatures to err and mistake! Must it not then be a great happiness to be secured, that tho we should mistake, it shall not be so as to hazard our eternal salvation? This is the case of those that are sincere: and this should quicken us all in using our utmost endeavours to be such, and to become more and more so, to purge out more and more the remains there may be in us of guile and hypocrisy.

2. THIS may serve to make such easy and peaceable in their own minds, whose consciences bear witness to their sincerity. *If your hearts do not condemn you in this respect, then may you well have confidence towards God,* 1 John iv. 21. If you know that you are sincerely willing to know and do the will of God, that in order hereunto you have been lifting up holy hands to God, made this the matter of your fervent prayer,



prayer, that God would lead you into all saving truth, and have set your selves with all impartiality and diligence to search after the truth, as it is in Jesus; so that you can say, if we are mistaken, 'tis not owing to any slothful indifference to truth, to an unwillingness to search after it, or discover it, lest it should make us uneasy in any of the courses we take; I say, if you know this concerning your selves, distrust not the goodness and faithfulness of God, the kindness and compassion of your redeemer toward you; depend upon it, that you shall be led into all necessary and saving truth. And therefore be not moved with the rash censures of men: they may wound themselves, but they can't hurt you by their hard speeches. The holy Scripture pronounces your course to be safe, *Prov. x. 9. He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely:* and you may rest satisfied in that determination, let who will differ from it.

*Obs. V.* GREAT good may sometimes be found, where 'tis little expected and look'd for. Thus it was in the case of *Nathanael*. You may easily imagine he had but little expectation of advantage, when he was coming to see Jesus of *Nazareth*, since he came under the power of such a prejudice, that no good thing could, or however that it was at least very unlikely that any good thing should come out of *Nazareth*: and yet what greater good could he meet with, than what he actually found? He found the Messiah, he found a saviour, where he had no such expectation.

THUS is it sometimes order'd by the providence of God on other occasions. Men come to see and hear out of mere curiosity, without the least thought of receiving any advantage, nay, it may be, to laugh and scoff at the preacher and his doctrine; and they are surpriz'd by God's preventing goodness and mercy: they come with levity of spirit; and are sent away with a full, a sorrowful, and broken heart: they come to divert themselves; and God makes them (such is the freeness and riches of his grace) in good sadness to lay to heart their need of a saviour, and draws them to him: and thus they meet with what they little thought of or expected. Would to God this might be the

the happy effect of the curiosity of some who come with prejudice among us. I am confident, whatever the representations are, which are made of us, we have no other design than what *Philip* had upon *Nathanael*, and what every faithful minister must have upon those he preaches to, to bring them to Christ, that they may have him for their saviour. And may that God, who alone can draw men to his Son, say *Amen* to our endeavours, that we may be indeed successful in promoting this blessed design.

*Obs. VI.* THE way to know the certainty of things, is to make trial of them: *Come and see.* This was the best advice that could possibly be given. *Nathanael* was in doubt, and could not easily suppose that any good thing could come out of *Nazareth*. Well, let it be ever so unlikely, and tho you have no expectation, yet *come and see*; examine, search, and try; and judge not before you have done so. Was it not wisdom in *Philip* to give this counsel? and was it not prudence in *Nathanael* to take it? Had he given way to his prejudices, had he been awed by a deference to ecclesiastical rulers, and, for fear of offending them, refused so much as to come, he had miss'd of the greatest satisfaction he could desire on earth, even the seeing the Lord's Christ. Tho he had a strong prejudice, yet he could not but see that such pretences as our Saviour made, deserved to be look'd into, and carefully examin'd. And this is a rule which we may safely give with reference to all points of doctrine, and more especially where honest men offer any thing to the world: *Prove all things: hold fast that which is good,* 1 *Thess. v. 21.* They that distrust the force and evidence of truth, or the goodness of the cause they would maintain, may propose a different rule, and tell you, that you should prove nothing, but hold fast what fallible men have taught you. I must own, I know no principle of my religion that will not bear a strict examination, and thro inquiry; and therefore my business shall always be to appeal to the understandings and consciences of men. You hear how we are reviled, slander'd, and abused. According to the general vogue, nothing good is to be expected from us: would you know whether our principles



ples or worship are such as men confidently report? *Come and see*; see with your own eyes, and judge for your selves; and take not things blindly upon trust from those who are afraid to see themselves, and therefore resolve never to look into matters, but sit down contented with the traditions of their fathers. *Come and see*, whether we say any thing but what is agreeable to the rule of our holy religion: search the Scriptures, and see whether the things that we speak are according to them, or not.

*Obs. VII.* EVERY one who is a true disciple of Christ, has such a conviction of his excellency, as that he cannot but be earnestly desirous of bringing others under the same, that they may likewise become his disciples. Thus *Philip*, when he was called by Christ, and become his disciple, with joy and triumph acquaints *Nathanael* with the happy discovery he had made, in order to engage him to believe in Christ, as he did himself. *We have found him*, saith he, *ver. 45. of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.* And when *Nathanael* could not easily come into such a belief, because of the place from whence Jesus came, he does not presently give over, but presses him to *come and see*. In like manner, no sooner had our Saviour convinced the woman of *Samaritania* that he was the Christ, but she was desirous of bringing others under the same conviction, and therefore hastens to her neighbours, and calls upon them: *Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?* John iv. 29. Both a regard to the honour of our Redeemer, and a concern for the salvation of mens souls, should ingage us to do what we can to bring men to the true knowledge of Christ, and an unfeigned subjection to him. And as we profess our selves the disciples and followers of Christ, let us make this our aim and endeavour, and so evidence our selves to be sincere in our profession. We may put men upon considering and weighing the proofs of his doctrine, the excellency of his design, the greatness of his love, his ability to help and save us, which may be great inducements to them to submit to him. But to close all, there is one way, which we should each of us take to recommend him and

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his religion to others; and that is, by endeavouring to live up to the rules he has given us. When we are circumspect and unblamable, meek and patient, this redounds to the honour of our great Lord. And the apostle's prayer for the *Thessalonians*, 2 *Thess.* 1. 11, 12, we should make our own, for our selves and one another: and with that I conclude: *Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*





consider the one master to whom they belonged, and whose disciples they were, and that ministers were to



# A S E R M O N O N

I COR. iii. II.

*For other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

**S**O unspeakably great are the things which Christ has done for us, and the obligations which he has thereby laid us under to himself, that no true Christian can be without a concern for his honour and glory. The apostles are an excellent example to us herein, as they always discover'd a particular sense of his love, and zeal for his honour in the world: and we must be very unworthy of the name of Christians, should we not in some measure resemble them in their temper, and most earnestly desire in all things to exalt and magnify him. Thus we see St. Paul behaved himself, when the *Corinthians* were divided about their teachers, one crying up one, and another another, and were ready to denominate themselves from the particular teachers to whom they adhered. He calls them to

consider the one master to whom they belong'd, and whose disciples they were, and that ministers were to be look'd upon as only acting under him, and that their business was to direct men to Christ.

**A T** *verse 9.* of this chapter the apostle speaks of himself, and those employ'd in the same office, as *labourers together with God*; or, as I think it should rather be render'd, *of God*; that is, they were all together fellow labourers whom God employ'd and made use of: and of the *Corinthians* who were Christians, he speaks as of *God's husbandry*, and *God's building*. Upon this latter comparison he dilates in the following *verses*. 'Tis common in the *Epistles* to represent Christians as an house, a building, a temple, an habitation; and the like we may observe in this place. Now saith the apostle in the foregoing verse, *According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon, But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.* Then follow the words of the text: *For other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ:* which I take to be a kind of parenthesis, in which he supposes or takes it for granted, that those who opposed him among the *Corinthians*, preach'd Christ as a foundation, and pretended to build upon him, tho' they built not rightly, as he more plainly intimates in some following *verses* of the chapter.

**NOW** when the apostle saith, *Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ*, his meaning seems to be this: that he did not suppose any one who pretended to be a Christian teacher or instructor would alter the foundation laid among them, or attempt to set up any other person instead of Christ. He took it for granted that the person who opposed him, and had wound in himself among them, did so far go upon the same foot he had done, that he made no change in the only foundation, which is Jesus Christ.

**IN** speaking to the words, I will

*First*, **CONSIDER** how Christ is said to be laid as a foundation.

*Secondly*, **SHEW** you that he is the only good foundation that can be laid, and that 'tis unreasonable to suppose men should attempt to lay any other.

*First,*



*First*, I AM to consider how Christ is said to be laid as a foundation. And

1. THERE is a sense in which the laying Christ as a foundation is peculiar to God himself; and accordingly, is it attributed to him in the holy Scriptures, *Isai. xxviii. 16. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Sion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.* The apostles have cited this passage, and applied it to Christ, *1 Pet. ii. 6. Rom. ix. 33.* And when the *Psalmist* speaks of this matter, *Psal. cxviii. 23.* he says, *This is the Lord's doing, it is marvellous in our eyes.*

WHEN we speak of a foundation laid in this sense, we have a regard to Christ consider'd as the great gift of God, and appointed by him to be the Saviour and Redeemer of men, as God has set him forth to be a propitiation for our sins, and constituted him the only foundation upon which we are to build our hopes of pardon, acceptance, and eternal salvation. But tho this is a great truth, and will afterwards fall in as an evidence of what I shall insist upon; yet I don't believe 'tis what is here directly and chiefly intended. And therefore,

2. I THINK *St. Paul* speaks of Christ as a foundation laid by himself, in his preaching him as such. In the foregoing verse the apostle speaks of himself as having laid a foundation. *I have,* says he, *as a wise master builder laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon:* and accordingly in the text is he to be understood, *Other foundation can no man* [that is, no Christian preacher or minister] *lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ;* that is, no one can lay any other foundation than that which I have already laid in my preaching, which is Christ. When we speak of Christ laid as a foundation in the former sense, we consider him as to his person and sufferings; but here, when the apostle speaks of his own laying Christ as a foundation, 'tis evident he refers to the doctrine he taught concerning him. Now this the apostle preach'd as the foundation: that is,

1. AS that which is absolutely necessary for persons to know and believe. And it seems evident to me, that

that there must be some doctrinal principles that must be fundamental in Christianity, and essentially necessary to be believed. Christianity is to be consider'd as a religion; and if there are not some things belonging to it that are fundamental and essential, how can it be distinguish'd from any other religion in the world? Every religion must have its peculiar form, and be founded upon some proper maxims or principles. If you consider natural religion, the foundation of it is the belief of a God, who is the proper object of our worship, and who rewards his worshipers: *He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*, Hebr. xi. 6. And whatever religion pretends to have revelation for its original, must of necessity pretend some peculiar tenets, whereby 'tis render'd different from any other religion. Thus the Jewish religion must suppose this foundation, that God spake by *Moses*, and gave the law by him: and so in like manner must there be some foundation of Christianity, whereby it must be essentially distinguish'd from every other religion in the world. Now 'tis plain, that the doctrine concerning Christ is such a foundation. A man cannot be a Christian, that does not believe the great things which we are taught by revelation concerning him; such as that he is the Messiah or the Christ, the anointed of God, whom he has commission'd and appointed to be the iustifier, teacher, and Saviour of the world; that he is the Son of God, whom by consequence we are to hear, whose doctrine we are to believe, and whose commands we are to obey. And not only are we to believe this general account of him, but likewise the particular things which are related concerning him, and the way and manner in which he accomplishes our salvation, even by his death and sufferings, that *he was deliver'd for our offences, and died for our sins, &c.* Thus St. Paul lets us know, that this was the sum of his preaching, it being what he very much insisted on as absolutely necessary to be known and understood by all, 1 Cor. i. 23. *But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness.* And Chap. ii. 2. *I determin'd not to know any thing among you [I made profession of no other science or learning, but what is comprised in this one thing] but Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*

AND



AND the very notion of a foundation plainly carries this in it, that it is somewhat absolutely necessary. You may as well suppose that a house can be built without a foundation, as you can suppose that a person can be a Christian without the knowledge of Christ, without believing him to be the Saviour of the world.

2. AS this is absolutely necessary, so here men must begin. There are many things necessary in a building, with which nevertheless men do not begin. A house can no more be without a roof, than without a foundation; but yet the foundation is laid first of all, and the roof at last. And thus when St. *Paul* speaks of his laying a foundation in his preaching, and tells us that foundation is Jesus Christ; 'tis evident he must be understood to speak of the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, with which he endeavour'd to acquaint men. In all arts and sciences there are some things necessary to be peculiarly inculcated at first, when a person enters upon the learning them: and so 'tis with reference to Christianity. And therefore, as the apostles in their preaching made it their business first to instruct men in the doctrine of Christ, to preach him as the Messiah, the Saviour of the world, who died for their sins, and rose again from the dead; so you see they insist upon the belief of this with those whom they received into the church of Christ, putting it to them, whether they believed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, or not. Hence the author of the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, Chap. vi. 1. speaks of *the principles of the doctrine of Christ*, which he likewise calls *the foundation*.

3. AS Christ is represented as the foundation, so it is suppos'd that all the other doctrines which Christians receive, are to be built as a superstructure upon him. The believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, will naturally infer the belief of all that doctrine which he came into the world to reveal and make known to men. Nor can men, when they are convinced of this, be insensible of his authority, or of the reasonableness of their yielding a ready obedience to all his commands and precepts. So that nothing is more proper than to begin with the doctrine concerning Christ, and to lay that down, as St. *Paul* did, as the foundation upon which he would afterward build in his preaching. To this purpose

pose he discourses in some *verses* which follow the text: *Now if any man, that is, any minister or preacher of the Gospel, build upon this foundation, namely Christ, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble: every man's work shall be made manifest. For the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward: If any man's work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.* Where he plainly supposes, that while men kept to this foundation, they might mistake in some things of lesser importance; they might build upon this foundation such things as would not endure the trial, and be of any service, however they might not prove ruinous and destructive to them. 'Tis a plain case, that a wide difference ought to be made between what is, and what is not fundamental in our holy religion; and a mistake in drawing a consequence from a revealed truth is nothing near so criminal, as the making that a fundamental which God has not made so. Where men have not an express and plain revelation, they should be very cautious in their assertions. 'Tis very possible they may be building only *wood, hay, and stubble* upon the foundation, when they imagine they are building upon it *gold, silver, and costly stones.*

*Secondly,* I COME now to the other part of my discourse, which is to shew that as Christ is the foundation, so he is the only one; and that no man can lay any other. When the apostle saith, no man can lay any other foundation, he is not to be understood absolutely to deny the possibility of any man's attempting to lay any other foundation. We see this is false in fact: *Mahomet* attempted to lay another foundation, and this has been done many times in the world. But we must understand him as intending either that no man can lay any other good foundation; or else, which I rather incline to, that no man, that is, no such man as he is speaking of, no one who calls himself a Christian, and pretends to be a minister of the Gospel, can be thought to intend to lay any other foundation than Christ: it must be thought, that as he professes himself a Christian minister, he goes upon the supposition of Christ's being the only foundation,



foundation, and that consequently he must in his preaching build upon him as such. Now here let it be considered,

I. THAT the great reason why no other foundation can reasonably be pretended, or be attempted to be laid by any man, is because God himself has laid no other. Nothing can be fit to be a foundation for us, but by the divine appointment. As we are rebellious creatures, it must belong to that God whom we have offended to fix the terms of our reconciliation to himself, and our eternal salvation: and no one can have any right to prescribe to him. His commands require of us a personal obedience, and the sanction of his law threatens the guilty personally: and 'tis at his pleasure, whether he will accept of any mediation, or regard the interposition of any person who would be willing to act in our behalf. Justice does no ways oblige him to dispense with the execution of the threatening upon the person of the transgressor; and if he is willing to deal with us upon any gracious terms, it must certainly belong to him to appoint them, and to fix upon the person who shall undertake our cause, and whom he will please to accept. It must be his right to judge who is fit for such an undertaking, and to prescribe in what way he shall manage it. If we could (as we cannot) offer him an equivalent, he might refuse it. But when he has actually appointed a mediator, and but one; it must be monstrous folly for any person to think of another. He has himself laid in *Sion* a foundation, a chief corner-stone, elect and precious; and he has laid but one: who then shall pretend to mention or preach any other? or who can have assurance enough to warrant men of success, if they are built upon any other? As *there is but one God*, so *there is but one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus*, 1 Tim. ii. 5. 'Tis only by this Mediator that we can draw nigh to God; and *thro him alone can we offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God*, 1 Pet. ii. 5. So far are we from being able to assure men of pardon, and the favour of God, if they depend upon any other, that we can most certainly assure them of the contrary; and that *there is salvation in no other*, there being *none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*, Act. iv. 12.

2. NO man that pretends to be a Christian minister can attempt to lay another foundation without the most notorious inconsistency. He that professes himself a Christian, thereby professes himself to be built upon Christ as his foundation: and would it not be great absurdity and folly for a man to recommend to others in his preaching a different foundation from that, upon which he declares he chooses to build himself? 'Tis not to be thought that men will purposely expose themselves; and yet, where the absurdity is so gross and palpable as in the present case, they must needs see this will be the consequence, and therefore 'tis not easy to imagine they can take such a foolish course.

3. NO preacher can lay any other foundation in his preaching, because he cannot with any face produce any tolerable evidence and assurance of the goodness and sufficiency of any other foundation. The reason why I am to pay a regard to Christ as the foundation of my faith, is because the signs and miracles which were wrought by him, and the other concurring testimonies that accompanied him, fully evidence that he was a teacher sent of God, such an one as cannot deceive and impose upon me. He is therefore, as he is called, a *sure foundation*, upon whose word I may infallibly depend. But is this true concerning any other, whom men can pretend to substitute in his room? The church of *Rome* indeed pretends to be infallible in her dictates: but the pretence is shameful; and nothing is clearer than the confutation of her pretended infallibility by the multitude and grossness of her errors. Nay, since they themselves own Christ as the foundation, and pretend to derive their infallibility from him, we may safely reject their authority, which tends plainly enough to overthrow the foundation they pretend to build upon; and since he is own'd on both sides to be infallible, we may safely disown the authority and infallibility of a church that contradicts him.

NOR are there any men in the world so wise or good, as that we can safely depend upon their judgment or testimony, and make them our foundation. They are severally, and together in a body or council, liable to err, and if we depend upon them may lead us wrong as well as right. Upon Christ therefore alone are we to rest.



rest as our foundation, and him only are ministers to lay as a foundation in their preaching.

THERE are two objections which may be made against what I have said, and which I shall briefly answer.

1. IT may be said, How can it be true that Christ is the only foundation, and that ministers are to preach no other, since the author of the epistle to the *Hebrews*, Chap. vi. 1. speaks so expressly of repentance from dead works, and faith towards God, as a foundation? and are not ministers to preach these?

I ANSWER, These may be called a foundation in a sense, but not in the same sense wherein Christ is called a foundation. They are a foundation, as they are duties made absolutely and fundamentally necessary to salvation; and so in that respect may be a ground of hope and comfort to us. But if they were a foundation in the same sense Christ is, they must not only be necessary, but must be accepted for their own sake: whereas this is not true, our repentance and faith at best being so defective, as to need pardon; and the reason why they are accepted is the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the promise of God's accepting these being made to us in and thro Christ. So that these duties are not, as Christ is, the primary foundation; but themselves rest, and are built upon Christ as the only foundation in that sense.

2. IT may be objected, How can St. Paul speak of Christ as the only foundation, when he elsewhere himself calls the *apostles* and *prophets* the foundation? Eph. ii. 20. And does not Christ himself speak of Peter as a rock, that is a foundation, upon which he would build his church?

I ANSWER, This does not interfere with Christ's being represented as the only foundation, because the apostles and prophets were not a foundation themselves, but as Christ by them declared and deliver'd his doctrine: they were not any farther a foundation or a rule for others than as Christ spake by them. When he did not, the chief apostle might be mistaken, and might be *withstood to the face*, as you know he was, Gal. ii. 11. And therefore this really confirms it, that Christ is the only foundation that can be laid; to which purpose also we

may observe how St. Paul expresses himself in the place alledg'd, Eph. ii. 20. *And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.* Christ therefore is himself the great support, upon which the whole building rests: and the apostles are a foundation only as used and employed by him in building his Church. And thus was that place concerning Peter understood by several of the antients.\*

I SHALL conclude with three reflections on what hath been said.

I. IF Christ is the only foundation that can be laid, then must it be your duty to adhere to him as such. You are to look upon yourselves as the disciples and servants of one master, even of Christ, and you are not to be the servants of men. Christ alone has the dominion over your faith. His word you are to receive, believe, and obey with all readiness of mind; but to the words of any men upon earth you are not oblig'd to yield any such subjection and regard. Since inspiration has ceased, and Christ speaks infallibly to us only in his word, 'tis there you are to expect to hear him, and know what he saith. But as to men, you are to look upon yourselves as standing in this case on equal terms with them: they and you are both to study the revelation which Christ has left to the world; you are to use your faculties as well as they theirs. The natural consequences of what he has deliver'd, so far as you see them to be such, you must, and, if you believe him, you cannot but receive. But you are not to take doctrines from men upon a trust to their judgments. The word of Christ is to dwell richly in you; and you are daily to search the Scriptures, and try your faith in divine matters by them.

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\* Thus Tertullian: In ipso ecclesia exstructa est, id est, per ipsum. *The church was built upon him, that is, by him.* De pudicitia, cap. 21. Thus again the author of the sermon, De fide Petri apostoli, which is the xlvii. of those printed with St. Ambrose: Petra dicitur, eo quod primus in nationibus fidei fundamenta posuerit. *He is therefore called a rock, because he first laid the foundation of the Christian faith among the Gentiles.*



2. IF Christ is the only foundation which can be laid, then let all your hope and confidence toward God be built and established upon him; and do you look for the mercy of God only upon his account, and for his sake. The Scripture has passed a severe doom upon those who do not believe in him, and who neglect his mediation. And miserable indeed must the case be of all who have had the means of knowing him afforded them, and yet at last shall be found in the number of unbelievers. How dreadful must it be for us to appear, as we all shortly must, before an almighty, tremendous, and provoked God, without having any part in the only mediator! Can we imagine a guilty wretch will be able to lift up his face before the God who made him, and whose laws he has broken, when he can't have this Saviour to appear for him, and to be his advocate in judgment? Will not his case be most doleful, when he must stand before Christ as his judge, and behold him the most tender but injur'd friend, turn'd to an angry, severe, and terrible enemy? We can never have confidence in the great day, unless our hope is fixed on this mediator; nor can we, while we live in the world, have any tolerable ground for confidence with reference to that day, when ever we think of it, but as we are built upon this foundation. How is it that we can go to God, or offer up any of our services to him, so as that they shall be acceptable, but only thro Jesus Christ? What other name can we plead for any of the blessings and benefits we ask of God? This foundation is laid by God in *Sion*, in order to our believing on him, *Isa. xxviii. 16.* 1 *Pet. ii. 6.* and if we are a spiritual house, we must be built upon him, 1 *Pet. ii. 5.* *In him must we be builded, for an habitation of God thro the Spirit,* *Eph. ii. 22.* Let it be seriously consider'd, that now God has laid this precious corner-stone, this foundation in *Sion*, if men neglect to build upon him, he will prove *a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence* to them, 1 *Pet. ii. 8.* and as they stumble and fall on this stone, they shall be broken; but hereafter it will fall on them, to grind them to powder, as our Saviour speaks, *Matth. xxi. 44.* that is, he will utterly destroy them: they shall be crushed by him, and,

and, according to the expression *Psal. ii. 9.* be dashed in pieces by him like a potter's vessel.

3. SINCE Christ is the only foundation of all our hopes, let him be most precious to us. This use St. Peter teaches us to make of this consideration; for having spoken of Christ under this notion, and the advantage Christians have by believing on him, he immediately adds, *1 Pet. ii. 7. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious.* He is most worthy of our best esteem, who has done so much for us, and upon whom all our hopes rest for eternity. And it must be our duty to study his excellencies, and endeavour to know more of his love, that so we may be the more sensible of the goodness of that foundation upon which we are built: and careful should we be that we entertain not the least unworthy thought of him.

GIVE me leave here to caution you against an error, which I take to be very injurious and disparaging to this Mediator, who is the only foundation of our hope toward God; and that is the opinion of *Socinus* and *Sabellius*, which allows not really to our Saviour any distinct nature beside the human. While they suppose the presence only of the supreme God with the man Christ Jesus, they in effect deny any vital union of human flesh with that divine nature which the Scripture gives us an account of. They seem to me really to make the WORD that was in the beginning with God, and was God, by whom God made all things, to be only a mere name, and to allow him no being at all. And is not this highly injurious to our Redeemer? What is this but to deny that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh? and what a strange notion must we then have of this foundation which God has laid in *Sion*?

BUT tho we are not in our censures to bear hard upon men who involuntarily, and so honestly mistake; yet let us, my brethren, endeavour to entertain high and honourable thoughts of this our glorious Redeemer, conceiving of him according to what the Scriptures represent him to be, the beloved of the Father, who had a glory with him before the world was, the person by whom he made the worlds, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, by whom all things were  
created



created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, whether visible or invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; by and for whom all things were created, and by whom all things consist: a person who was in the form of God; but emptied himself, and took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Let us raise our thoughts of his innate greatness, that we may the more admire his condescending goodness in submitting to take part with us in our flesh and blood, and to die an ignominious and accursed death, the death of the cross. Let us consider him, who having died for us, is now raised again, and exalted to the highest glory and honour, and is at the right hand of God, making intercession for us in the virtue of his death. And when we thus consider him, we shall be the more easily satisfied of the reasonableness of our hope in him; we shall be the more sensible of the stability and immoveableness of that foundation upon which all our hopes are established for time and for eternity; and so to us who believe he will be precious.

# FINIS



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